

(December 6, 2007) Historic Energy Bill â€“ Including Lipinski Initiatives â€“ Passes House

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Landmark Bill Repeals Big Oil Tax Breaks, Cuts Foreign Oil Addiction, Reduces Global Warming

[WASHINGTON, DC] Today, Representative Dan Lipinski helped pass the Energy Independence and Security Act, a sweeping energy plan that will revolutionize our nation's energy economy, help free us from our dependence on foreign oil, create millions of new jobs, reduce the threat of climate change, and roll back tax breaks for Big Oil corporations in order to invest in clean, alternative energies.

“This is a landmark bill, making the most sweeping changes to our policy on energy and the environment in at least a generation,” said Lipinski. “I am pleased to have played a key role in authoring important provisions of this bill, and to have worked with my colleagues to achieve this victory for the pocketbooks of middle-class Americans, the security of our country, and the health of the environment.”

Rep. Lipinski, Vice Chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee and a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, authored two key provisions included in the legislation: the H-Prize Act and the BRIGHT Energy Savings Act. These provisions will help advance the goals of cutting America's foreign oil dependence and reducing global warming through the development of new clean energy sources and a reduction in energy consumption; in addition, tens of millions of taxpayer dollars will be saved by reducing the energy consumption of the federal government.

- BRIGHT Energy Savings Act: Requires the federal government – the nation's largest energy consumer – to use high efficiency light bulbs in 1,800 civilian office buildings; this change will significantly reduce energy consumption – about 75% savings for each of more than 3 million bulbs – saving tens of millions of taxpayer dollars; and

- H-Prize Act: Establish over \$50 million in cash prizes for the “H-Prize” program to spur innovation in hydrogen energy technologies and advance the use of hydrogen as a pollution-free transportation fuel that will replace gasoline.

“We must use American ingenuity to innovate and develop clean alternative energy to free us from the grip of foreign oil that threatens our planet,” explained Lipinski. “Hydrogen-powered vehicles are no longer the stuff of the future for the Jetson family; with investment and hard work, we can bring this and other technologies to the marketplace in the near future. That’s why I believe the \$50 million H-Prize, a unique incentive to encourage innovation, can be critical to our future.”

“With all the talk of developing a greener America, the federal government should be leading by example but instead lags behind,” stated Lipinski. “The government does not even use energy efficient light bulbs, such as CFLs, on a wide-scale basis. My provision requiring the federal government to use energy efficient light bulbs is a simple and common-sense way to significantly reduce energy consumption. It’s a win for the environment, a win for national security, and a win for American taxpayers.”

In addition to Lipinski’s initiatives, the comprehensive legislation will increase Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards to 35 mpg for cars and trucks by 2020, up from the current level of 27.5 mpg for cars and 22.2 mpg for light trucks. These provisions will save American families an estimated \$700 to \$1000 per year at the pump, while significantly reducing oil consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Other major provisions include a robust increase in the production of renewable motor fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel, and a Renewable Electricity Standard requiring utilities to generate 15 percent of electricity from renewable sources such as wind, biomass, solar, geothermal, and ocean tides by 2020. The legislation also strengthens and extends existing renewable energy tax credits, creates incentives for plug-in hybrid/electric vehicles, and mandates the production of more energy-efficient home appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers, and refrigerators. The bill repeals \$21 billion in tax subsidies for oil companies in order to pay for these investments.

“America needs innovative solutions to tackle the environmental and economic challenges we face today,” said Howard A. Learner, Executive Director of the Environmental Law & Policy Center. “The comprehensive energy package passed today is a great start with programs that just make sense—they are good for our energy security, good for economic development, good for the environment and save consumers money.”

“The Energy Independence and Security Act is a victory for all Americans,” said Lipinski. “With record-high gas prices this year in the Chicago region and elsewhere in this country along with America’s dependence on foreign oil from the Middle East and elsewhere, I strongly believe that this legislation is simply the right thing to do for American working families. And it will make a difference. By repealing unfair tax breaks for Big Oil corporations, by investing in clean, renewable energies, by boosting car and truck fuel efficiency standards to 35 mpg, by requiring utilities to generate 15 percent of electricity from renewable energy, we can reduce our dependence on foreign oil and put America on a path toward energy independence.”

“The energy bill before Congress is profoundly important,” said Rebecca Stanfield, State Director of Environment Illinois. “It will help us fight global warming, while saving consumers money on their energy bills, creating jobs, and reducing our dependence on oil imports. It’s long past time to put these measures on the President’s desk. Environment Illinois applauds Congressman Lipinski and all of the Illinois legislators who were persistent and dedicated advocates for these clean energy solutions.”

The Senate is expected to begin consideration of the bill soon.